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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHATS

Monday, January 9, 1933

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Subject: "Using Canned Goods." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A. and the National Cannery Association.

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Did you ever consider what a lot of queer ideas get abroad in this world? Where they come from nobody knows. Probably someone makes a guess or has a pet theory and tells a neighbor. That neighbor passes it along. And first thing you know people generally are believing it as solemn truth founded on actual fact.

Ye housekeepers all have our notions. Some of them are correct. Others are founded on guess, superstition or rumor and may be mistaken. I've noticed that whenever a new food preparation appears on the market, housekeepers here and there have odd ideas about it. That's the way with canned foods. Our grandmothers couldn't step down to the store and buy their vegetables, fruits, meats or fish in cans as we lucky housewives are able to do. The canning industry hadn't developed in those days. And some of the early commercially canned foods were not the safe, wholesome products on the market today. So, many an old-timer at house-keeping was suspicious of these new foods.

Not long ago a friend of mine said, "My mother-in-law criticizes me for using so much canned food. She is very proud of the fact that she has never bought any canned food during all the years she has kept house."

That mother-in-law had a mistaken notion, a prejudice, you see. For properly canned foods lose little of the value of raw products, sometimes not so much as when they're cooked in the home kitchen. In the earlier days our pioneer American families often lived on a seriously restricted diet in winter. They expected, as a matter of course, to be in a run-down condition by early spring and to be in need of tonics. They didn't realize that this low vitality at the end of winter was caused by their restricted diet. Fortunately, our winter and summer diets are much more alike today, thanks to canned foods and vitamins and to a more general supply throughout the winter of milk and eggs, of green foods brought from warm climates and such fruits as grapefruit, oranges, and apples.

Many good housekeepers I know believe that the minute they open a tin can they must pour the food out into a dish or the can will poison the food. That's a dreadfully mistaken notion. Is it safe to leave food standing in an open can?

"Yes," say the specialists. "In fact, the can is often the most convenient container to keep the food in. Food spoils no faster and no slower in the open can than in any other open container. You can leave the food in the can just as safely as you can leave it in a dish. But, of course, you have to use the same care to keep it cool and covered".

Right here I think somebody is protesting, "But if food stands in the can, particularly acid food like tomatoes, it gets a 'tinny' taste. Doesn't that show that some of the tin is in the food? And isn't that dangerous?"

The specialists answer, "Some acid foods like fruits and tomatoes, when stored in an open can, do tend to dissolve iron. This may give the food a slightly metallic taste, but it is not harmful. The so-called 'tin cans' which commercial canners use and which many housewives are now using in their own canning, really contain more iron than tin--that is, they're made of a thin sheet of steel with a coat of pure tin. So when you think you taste a 'tin' taste, you are really taking a little dissolved iron, which isn't harmful in the least."

Once in a while the label on the can advises removing the contents as soon as the can is opened. This is because the canners think that an open can, partly filled with food, doesn't look very attractive and that their canned products will seem more appetizing to you if you transfer them to a dish.

Another wrong notion some people have is that the liquid in a can of vegetables, like peas or beans, should be drained off and not used. Once upon a time the liquor in canned vegetables was salty. Such is not the case now. That juice contains valuable nutrients. Discarding it is a sad waste.

If you are serving your canned vegetables hot, heat them in their own juice until it has almost evaporated. If you want to do this quickly so the vegetables won't overcook, use a wide shallow saucepan.

Next week I'll answer some questions people ask about canned foods. Just now the time has come for our menu, a winter menu featuring some inexpensive canned foods. The main dish is Cheese Biscuit on tomatoes; Canned lima beans; Cabbage and shredded carrot salad; and Canned fresh prunes.

Now for that new and very inexpensive main dish, Cheese Biscuit on tomatoes. It's something like dumplings cooked in canned tomatoes. Here are the ingredients:

2 cups of sifted flour	1 cup of milk, or enough to make a drop
4 teaspoons of baking powder	batter
3/4 teaspoons of salt	5 cups of canned tomatoes
3 tablespoons of fat	1 and 1/2 teaspoons of salt
	1/8 teaspoon of pepper, and
	1/2 pound of grated cheese.

I'll repeat that list. (repeat.)

Sift the dry ingredients together. Rub in the fat with the tips of the fingers. Make a well in the center of the fat and flour mixture and pour in enough milk to make a very soft dough. Now heat the tomatoes in a large, flat-bottom pan with a cover. Add the salt and pepper. Drop the biscuit dough by spoonfuls over the top of the tomatoes, cover tightly and boil gently for twenty minutes. Remove the cover, sprinkle the cheese over the top of the biscuits. Then sprinkle a little salt over the cheese. Cover again for a few minutes to melt the cheese and serve at once.

Tuesday: "Questions and Answers."

